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COTTON MATHER
&
WITCHCRAFT

TWO
NOTICES OF
MR UPHAM HIS REPLY

BOSTON: T R Marvin & Son 131 Congress Street
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ESTATE OF ABRAM E. CUTTER
AUG. 18, 1907.

Till Cain's Club be taken out of Abel's hand, as well as out of Cain's, 'tis impossible to rescue the world from endless confusions. *C. Mather*

The Christian religion brings us not into a temporal Canaan—it knows no designs, it has no weapons, but what are purely spiritual. *C. Mather*

It will be safe to account the names, as well as the lives, of our neighbors. *C. Mather*

We should be very tender in such relation, lest we wrong the reputation of the innocent by stories not enough inquired into. *C. Mather*

I cannot indeed resist the conviction that he looked upon the occurrences in the Salem trials with secret pleasure, and would have been glad to have had them repeated in Boston. *C. W. Upham*

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I confess it is a lamentation—and it shall be for a lamentation—that so much false history is imposed upon the world. *C. Mather*

How many excellent men, and more precious than the golden wedge of Ophir, have been strangely *Sanbenito'd* by partial, prejudiced, passionate historians; and handed down to posterity in vile characters. *C. Mather*

It is not more certain, than shameful, that historians very commonly write as tools of a party. The motto to be inscribed on them is *Omnia pro Tempore, Nihil pro Veritate.* *C. Mather*

Indeed Luther and Calvin, and some other buffeted heroes, have had their vindicators. But who will dare appear in the vindication of —— [Puritan ministers scandalized in English history] or so much as say, *'Tis pity they are not vindicated?* Who is there? Who so hardy or honest as to take the *Athenæ Oxonienses* of a *Wood*, and so take the poison out, that the books may be read with safety, and become a useful performance? *C. Mather*

UPHAM *VS.* MATHER.

MR. Charles W. Upham's Reply to Mr. Poole's article in the *North American Review* for April last, has been lying on our desk for several months, and we have at last, with painful application, mastered this tangled mass of historical detail. The author, we think, has made a mistake in not bringing his statement into a narrower and more readable compass. His paper, if printed in the *North American Review*, would take an entire number. We live in a busy age. Many persons interested in the discussion will, having read the title page and skimmed over the surface, feel their utter inability to wade through the ninety-one pages of small type in double columns. The paper is heavy and mo-

notonous in the extreme, and the writer never relieves the reader by laying aside the character of a special pleader for that of an impartial historian. His task is to write down the Mathers, and to substantiate the hard assertions he has made against them in his previous writings. Some of his points we will endeavor to condense and illustrate.

The subject of the first of his twenty chapters is "The Connection of the Mathers with the Superstitions of their Time." Towards its close he sums up as follows: "My first position is (we abridge somewhat his redundant phraseology) that Increase and Cotton Mather are, *particularly the latter*, justly chargeable with, and may be said to have brought about, the extraordinary outbreaks of fanaticism exhibited in the cases of the Goodwin children and of the afflicted children at Salem village." Here is the corner-stone of his argument, and we will inspect it for a moment.

We need only consider the bearing of these charges upon the son, for Mr. Upham elsewhere admits that the father condemned and opposed the proceedings at Salem. We do not object to his connecting the Goodwin case with the Salem trials, for the younger Mather was as much responsible for the one as for the other.

The Goodwin case occurred in 1688. Cotton Mather was then twenty-five years of age. It is in proof that he had no personal connection with the case till it had been the town talk for three months, and then he was invited by the father of the afflicted family to his house with the other ministers of the town. Mr. Mather, when he called, was so much a stranger that he required an introduction. These facts were first brought to light by Mr. Poole, to disprove the statement of Mr. Upham in his Lectures of 1831, that the Goodwin case "was brought about by *Dr.* Mather's management." In his late "Reply" Mr. Upham does not pretend that he had any evidence to sustain this gross charge, and says that, in his History of 1867, "I carefully omitted the sentence, fearing that it might lead to misapprehension." Why misapprehension? The fault of the sentence is not in ambiguity, but in its falsification of history. His History of 1867 is full of charges against Mr. Mather quite as gross, and having as little foundation in fact. We need not go beyond the paragraph which he thinks he has expurgated (vol. II.. p. 366) to find two examples, namely: "he repeatedly endeavored to get up cases of the kind in Boston;" and "he was secretly and cunningly endeavoring to renew them (the Salem proceedings) the next year in his own parish in Boston." It is singular that one who has the

historical faculty so highly developed that he can tell what a person who lived almost two centuries ago "was secretly and cunningly endeavoring to do," misapprehends so completely his public acts and avowed opinions.

In answer to the charge that the Mathers, especially the younger, brought about the Goodwin and Salem cases, we need only inquire what Cotton Mather had done, up to the year 1688, to bring about the extraordinary outbreak of fanaticism here alleged? Holding, doubtless, the opinions common at that time on the subject of witchcraft and diabolical agency, *he had written no book* on the subject, and Mr. Upham has never undertaken to, and cannot show that he had preached a sermon, or had any opinions thereon. His corner-stone crumbles at the first touch.

We are well aware of a statement which has long been current in our histories, that Mr. Mather published his first work on Witchcraft in 1685, and we may here pause for a moment and examine it.

"It was not," says Mr. Peabody, in his "Life of Cotton Mather," 1836, p. 241, "till Cotton Mather in 1685 published an account of several cases of

witchcraft, with arguments to prove that they were no delusions, that such fears and fancies revived. The case of Goodwin's family took place soon after, and this being published renewed the appetite for horrors, and prepared the way for the scenes exhibited at Salem."

Mr Barry, in his "History of Massachusetts," 1856, vol. II., p. 31, says, "Cotton Mather published in 1685 an account of cases which had occurred in New England, with arguments to prove that they were the effects of familiarity with the devil." The same statement may be found in other historical works, among which is that candid and excellent work, the "History of the Second Boston Church," p. 102. Mr. Upham speaks of himself (Reply, p. 20) as "a critical interpreter," and of his reviewer as "a careless, cursory reader." He therefore *knows* that Cotton Mather published no work on witchcraft in 1685, and yet he has allowed the statement to pass unchallenged these many years. More than this, he has perpetuated the misprint, out of which the error originated, in his History of 1867, vol. II. p. 361. This date evidently made a strong impression on the mind of Mr. Peabody (than whom there never was a fairer, kindlier-hearted man) prejudicial to Mr. Mather, and it will make this impression on any thought-

ful man who accepts it as true. But it is not true; and it was the duty of the "critical interpreter" of Salem Witchcraft to have corrected the error in his later publications.

The error in date we have described has evidently arisen from two sources—a misprint in the "Magnalia," of 1685 for 1689, the date of Cotton Mather's "Memorable Providences;" and a misconception of a statement of Gov. Hutchinson in "History of Massachusetts," vol. II., p. 24, concerning another work printed in 1685, or more correctly 1684. This last work was Increase Mather's "Remarkable Providences." The "Magnalia" was printed in England, and the author had no opportunity to revise the proofs as the work was passing through the press. A list of Mr. Mather's three hundred and eighty-three publications is appended to Samuel Mather's life of his father. The first title in the list, "The Call of the Gospel," is dated 1686. An earlier book has recently been found, "Elegies on Collins," which was printed in 1685.

It is alleged, secondly, that Mr. Mather was especially chargeable for the Salem cases. It is not pretended that he had any personal intercourse, or even acquaintance, with the afflicted persons at Salem Village; but that his "Memorable Providences,"

printed in 1689, containing an account of the Goodwin case and the sermons he preached on the occasion, was the cause of all the mischief. He published no other book on witchcraft till 1693, and no connection has been traced between this book and the origin of the Salem cases in 1692. Witch trials had been held in the colony, and the death penalty inflicted, for more than forty years. The Indian servants of Mr. Parris, with whom the Salem troubles arose, brought their superstitions from the West Indian Islands. One or more English books on witchcraft, which were then very numerous, were in Mr. Parris's family, but no trace was found there of Mr. Mather's. This was an unfortunate circumstance; for the little manual would have taught the family and the Salem authorities a safe and judicious practice in treating the subtile enemy. Prayer and fasting were Mr. Mather's method of dealing with evil spirits—not hanging. Mr. Upham in his "Reply," when the proof was brought home to him by Mr. Poole, admits that this was the import of the book. A spirit of kindness and charity towards persons afflicted and accused pervades the volume from beginning to end. Samuel Willard and the other ministers of the town vouched for the facts and principles of the book in a commendatory preface.

With these facts staring him in the face—for Mr. Upham's equanimity is greatly ruffled at the intimation that some incidents and books relating to the subject may have escaped his observation—he asserts that Cotton Mather is justly chargeable with the chief responsibility of originating the Goodwin and Salem cases. We question whether a more baseless accusation against a good man was ever made and repeated by a writer who had claims to a historical reputation. His mode of making charges, and his manipulation of evidence to sustain them, reminds one unpleasantly of the Salem method of trying alleged witches in 1692. It would hang all the eminent clergymen of the present day; and the more brilliant their talents, commanding their influence, and devoted their piety, the sooner they would swing. They are responsible for all the crimes and outrages in the community; for, if they had chosen, they might, with their great personal influence, have prevented them. This is the favorite noose which Mr. Upham always has ready for Cotton Mather, and he jerks it often. Such was Mr. Mather's commanding position that he might, if he had chosen, have prevented Gov. Phips from appointing a special court to try the Salem cases; he might, by the same influence, have mitigated the rigors of the court, sheltered the accused, and stopped the trials. If Mr. Up-

ham's argument, as to the controlling influence Mr. Mather had over Gov. Phips, proves any thing, it proves that Mr. Mather through Phips, did, and is entitled to the credit of doing, the noble acts last named.

Mr. Mather was less than thirty years of age, and never was in any official position. He was simply a Christian minister. His father, on the other hand, was the most eminent man in the Colony, President of Harvard College, a statesman as well as a minister. As a public agent of the Colony, he had resided for years near the Court at London, and had transacted the most difficult and complicated business within the range of statesmanship. Through his nomination and influence the Governor and the entire Council received their appointments. We might naturally suppose that a person of such antecedents would have some influence in the affairs of State; but Mr. Upham sees little of this. It is the son, the young preacher, who is the impersonation of the powers that be, both in Church and State. The most enthusiastic admirer of Cotton Mather, we believe, has never before given him such a commanding position at this early period of his life. Of Increase Mather he says in his "Reply," "I had no peculiar interest in determining what his views were," and yet he

couples him as accessory before the act, with his son in bringing about the Goodwin and the Salem cases. Increase Mather, however, wrote the most important book concerning witchcraft which was prepared while the Salem trials were going on. No reader simply of Mr. Upham's Lectures and History would ever ascertain the fact.

Mr. Upham's theory is, that no sooner had Gov. Phips landed in Boston, in May, 1692, than Cotton Mather met him, gave him exaggerated accounts of what had transpired at Salem, kept him away from other leading men, and brought him so much under the magic power of his own personal influence that the Governor became his tool. The Governor's appointment of the Special Court to try the cases at Salem was, so far as its responsibility was concerned, Mr. Mather's act. For the present purpose of the argument we will accept this statement. Phips, says Mr. Upham, was an illiterate person. Mr. Bancroft says he was a dull, headstrong, feeble-minded man, and in politics knew nothing of general principles. As usual, Mr. Bancroft takes his opinions at second-hand, and is wholly wrong. The letters of Phips, which Mr. Upham prints, are very able; but on our present theory we must suppose they were written for him by Mr. Mather, who was a noted letter-writer. Philip English and wife,

who were arrested at Salem and imprisoned in Boston, were, by the ministers of the town, stealthily sent off to New York for their personal safety, bearing a letter from Gov. Phips to Gov. Fletcher of New York, commending the fugitives to his hospitality and protection, and this they received. After the excitement was over the exiles returned safe and sound. Honor again to Mr. Mather. Mr. Upham cannot sufficiently express his gratitude to Gov. Phips for stopping the executions at Salem in the autumn of 1692. It was a very creditable act, and it all redounds to the glory of Mr. Mather, who held the conscience and controlled the acts of the Governor! No eulogist of Mr. Mather ever claimed so much for him as this.

Mr. Upham discovers that his argument is proving too much, and he attempts to hedge by asserting that a coolness had intervened between the Mathers and the Governor, and he knows the very moment it commenced. In evidence of this he states that at the next election ten anti-Mather men, including Elisha Cooke, displaced as many Mather men in the Council. This election did not take place till May, 1693, and the last execu ions were Sept. 22, 1692. The Council consisted of twenty-eight members, and the ten new members did not change the character of the Council. The

impression is given that this was a personal matter whereas it was the political question of the old and the new charter. The Mathers, who were not in the government, were new-charter men. Elisha Cooke and his party were old-charter men. The new charter was now in full operation; and it was the part of political sagacity to introduce a representation of the defeated party into the Council. Without claiming that Cotton Mather had any such influence over Phips as Mr. Upham alleges, it is clear that there was a warm friendship and respect existing between them, (which is evidence of Phips's intelligence and sagacity) and that this bond was never sundered. Mr. Mather was the Governor's biographer, and no one can read his affectionate eulogy in the *Magnalia,* without being impressed with this fact.

The letter of Gov. Phips to the government was written Oct. 14, 1692, "at the moment," says Mr. Upham, (how does he know this?) "when he had made up his mind to break loose from those who had led him to the hasty appointment of the Special Court." The structure of the sentence implies that these persons were the Mathers; whereas Phips says that "he depended on the judgment of the court" (or the persons composing the court, of which Stoughton was the head,) in the witch-

craft proceedings. This passage, again, Mr. Upham refers to the Mathers: "I was grieved," says Phips, "to see that some who should have done their majesties and the Province better service, have so far taken counsel of passion as to desire the precipitancy in these matters." The passage obviously refers to Stoughton and the court, who were in the service of their majesties and the Province, which could not be said of the Mathers. Phips in no instance alludes to the Mathers or to the clergy as being in any way responsible for the proceedings.

We have marked other points for examination, but our allotted space is filled. We cannot see that Mr. Upham has controverted any point in Mr. Poole's paper. In attempting to vindicate his own positions he has fallen into many historical errors, and has shown that his treatment of Mr. Mather was wholly unfair, and nothing else than the persecution which he himself condemns.

Watchman and Reflector.

From the result of my own continued researches, and the suggestion of others, I feel inclined to the opinion that no very considerable alterations will be made; and that subsequent editions will not impair the authority or value of the work as originally published in 1867. *C. W. Upham*, 1869

He that can glory that in fourteen [forty?] years he hath not altered nor improved his conceptions of some things, shall not have me for his rival. *C. Mather*, 1723

COTTON MATHER.

DURING his life, and for a hundred years after his death, no name in the annals of the Province of Massachusetts, was held in more reverence than that of Cotton Mather, unless it be that of his father, Increase Mather. The son was a prodigy from his youth. He knew more languages, wrote more books, collected more materials for history, and exerted a wider religious and political influence than any man who had lived in New England. During the greater part of his long professional life his publications averaged one a month. His historical works form the connecting link between the first and fourth generations. He had a kind heart, a genial manner, and a burning zeal for the cause of

evangelical religion. When he died, in February, 1728, his funeral, though he had never held a political office, was the largest and most impressive that had ever taken place in Boston. "The Lieutenant Governor, Council, and House of Representatives walked in the procession," says a contemporary account, "and then a large train of ministers, justices, merchants, scholars, and other principal inhabitants, both men and women. The streets were crowded with people, and the windows filled with sorrowful spectators all the way to the burying-place." Four funeral sermons, preached by the ministers of the town, were printed at the time. Two of these sermons were by Thomas Prince and Benjamin Colman, names of the highest historical reputation, and who intimately knew the man to whose memory they paid the most glowing and affectionate eulogy. Their texts were, "My father, my father! the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof." "And Enoch walked with God, and was not, for God took him."

Within the last forty years an attempt has been made by historical writers, to reverse this contemporaneous record, and to heap reproach upon his

name. This concerted hostility dates from the larger development of "liberal Christianity" in Massachusetts. The first marked demonstration appeared in Mr. James Savage's notes to Governor Winthrop's Journal, printed in 1825. It is, some one has said, a matter of doubt whether Mr. Savage's chief object in this work was to annotate Winthrop or to abuse Cotton Mather. These strictures of Mr. Savage only touched upon his reputation as a historian. Soon after, Rev. Charles Wentworth Upham, then a Unitarian clergyman of Salem, prepared a course of Lectures on the subject of Witchcraft, which he delivered in that town and the vicinity, and in 1831 printed them in a volume. Here appeared a new series of charges bearing upon the moral and religious character of Mr. Mather. He was accused of being the instigator, fomenter and conductor of the witchcraft prosecutions at Salem, 1692,— of delighting in scenes of blood,—of dishonesty and corruption. These views are found to-day in the text-books used in our public schools.

On the publication of the Lectures in 1831, a writer in the *Christian Register* (Unitarian) challenged these statements as being contrary to the

historical record of Mr. Mather's character. Mr. Upham, in the Appendix of his second edition, printed in 1832, noticed the above criticism, and stated that it was a new view which he had himself discovered from a study of the documents of that period. Before this time, he admits, "a shadow of doubt had never been suggested respecting Mr. Mather's moral and Christian character;" but having found that he was "in reality dishonest and corrupt, a regard for truth and justice compelled me to express my convictions." These accusations, brought out in 1831, were intensified in his "History of Salem Witchcraft," printed in 1867.

An article on "Cotton Mather and Salem Witchcraft," appeared in the *North American Review* for April, 1869, in vindication of Mr. Mather; showing that Mr. Upham was either not familiar with, or had intentionally misrepresented the contemporaneously printed literature on the subject,—that the contents of well-known manuscript collections had not been explored,—that he had suppressed the most important printed documents of the period, such as the "Advice of the Boston Ministers," of June 15, 1692, which was drawn up by

Cotton Mather, and "Cases of Conscience concerning Witchcraft," written by Increase Mather, at the request of the Boston ministers, while the Salem trials were in progress, and which flatly contradict the statements of Mr. Upham,—that he had perverted the obvious meaning of Mr. Mather's writings,—and that the authorities on which he depended, such as Robert Calef's book, were wholly unreliable. The writer of the review was Mr. William F. Poole, a critic well versed in New England history.

Mr. Upham's "Reply" to Mr. Poole's review, has appeared in the *Historical Magazine*, and both papers have been printed in a separate form. The question at issue is not simply the character of Mr. Mather, but that of all the New England clergy of that period. Mr. Upham's "Reply" is unnecessarily long and inexcusably tedious. He introduces topics which have no relation to the points in issue, and his whole treatment of the subject is that of a partisan rather than an historian. He fails, it seems to us, to establish the positions which he has set up in his previous works, or to answer the strictures of his opponent. The concessions he is obliged to make are fatal to

his case. His theory has been, that Mr. Mather was the chief instigator and conductor of the trials at Salem. Mr. Poole produced the proof that Mr. Mather never attended one of the trials, either as prosecutor, witness or spectator. Mr. Upham admits this, and does not show why he did not mention it in his Lectures or History, for the fact is expressly stated in Mather's "Wonders of the Invisible World," and Calef's "More Wonders." Mr. Mather often went to Salem that summer, and we know that he was selected by the condemned persons, as their comforter and spiritual adviser. Would these persons have chosen for such a duty, the man who had brought them into their wretched condition? Mr. Upham endeavors, by his logic, to show that Mr. Mather, if not at any of the trials, was present at the preliminary examinations. He has examined the records, and finds almost every body else there, but not a trace of Mr. Mather. Unless he can show that the alleged chief conspirator was present on one or more of these occasions, he has no case.

His argument is this: Susannah Sheldon, one of the "afflicted children," testified on the 9th of May,

that there appeared to her a "shining white man." Mercy Lewis, on the 1st of April, stated that she had seen a "white spirit." The spirits usually testified to were of quite another color. Somebody must have told these girls about a *white* spirit. That person must have been Mr. Mather; and to do this he must have been present at the examinations, stood by their side, and put the idea in their ears. But why lay this charge especially upon Mr. Mather? Because nobody else knew about a *white* spirit; and he got the idea, so Mr. Upham asserts, from a Swedish book in his possession, which he quoted in his "Wonders of the Invisible World." A theory must be in a desperate condition to need this sort of confirmation. Perhaps in following out this incident, we can as well illustrate Mr. Upham's method, as by giving brief specimens of many others we have marked.

The girls were testifying concerning what appeared to be a good spirit; and they evidently borrowed the imagery of the New Testament, where such spirits are uniformly represented as clothed in white. Mercy Lewis saw her white spirit "in a glorious place which had no candles

nor sun, yet was full of light and brightness, and where they sung the song in Revelation, v. 9." For a clergyman to fall into such a mistake as this, and use it as historical evidence to convict another clergyman of a dreadful charge, must be classed among the curiosities of the clerical profession.

If Mr. Upham had been familiar even with witch lore, a white spirit would not have struck him with surprise. The books are filled with them. Increase Mather, in his Remarkable Providences of 1684, has a chapter on white spectres, and advises his readers to have nothing to do with them, for they are nothing else than the Devil in disguise. The service which the Swedish book is made to play in the argument, is very comical. Increase Mather was probably the owner of the book, for he used it in making his Remarkable Providences, before Cotton Mather had reached his majority. Mr. Upham will find it quoted on page 132 of the London reprint of 1856. Will he claim that Increase Mather stood near the girls at the examinations, and whispered in their ears about a white spirit?

It is fortunate that Mr. Upham did not live in Salem in 1692, with his present ideas of criminal and historical evidence. There would have been a dearth of ministers in the Province for the next generation. His methods would hang both the law and the *prophets*.

We never remember to have read a paper with so many historical errors, so much illogical and inconsequential reasoning, and such bald perversions of the plain meaning of contemporaneous documents. No one can read it without feeling an increased respect for Mr. Mather, and appreciating the spirit which animates his detractor.

Mr. Abner C. Goodell, jr., the neighbor and friend of Mr. Upham, has given a complimentary notice of the "Reply" in the Genealogical Register for April. He says: "As the writer in the *Edinburgh Review*, for July, 1868, has said of the History of Salem Witchcraft,—'no more accurate piece of history has been written'—so say we [A. C. G., Jr.] of this [Mr. Upham's] paper on Salem Witchcraft and Cotton Mather." The force of the compliment is impaired by the fact, that no writer on the subject ever made so many mistakes

as this same Edinburgh Reviewer. Besides repeating Mr. Upham's errors he manufactured them by wholesale for himself. He did not know that Salem Village was a different locality from Salem town; he made the date of the settlement 1620, "under a charter granted by *James I.* to the Governor and Company of Massachusetts Bay in New England;" and he makes a dreadful muddle of New England names and events. How a writer, who has not learned the alphabet of our local history, is capable of forming so authoritative an opinion as that expressed above, is quite as inexplicable as that Mr. Goodell should have used the extract in the manner he has, unless he intended to give his friend, what Calef calls an "ambidexter" endorsement.

Christian Era

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